

HOLOCAUST MEDIA PROJECT

Interview of Sam Roth

Transcribed by:

Judith Cohen

Q Can you tell me your name and where you live?

A Sam Roth. The address is Bueno, New Jersey.  
Route 40 and 54 in Bueno.

Q What is your phone number?

A Pardon me?

Q Phone number.

A 697-1919.

Q Can you tell me when you were interred, and just a very brief history of what camps you went through and the dates you went through.

A Well, I came in first when they took us from the ghetto. I came to Auschwitz. Moonkotch (phonetic) in our town. They took us -- well, I was in ghetto four weeks. They took us away from home one day after Pesach in 1944. It was in April, but I don't remember the date. We were in ghetto for four weeks, and we came to Auschwitz three days after Shavuos. You know what Shavuos is?

Q No.

A Well, six weeks after Passover we have a Jewish holiday what is called Shavuos, which is going to be now in another four weeks from now. Shavuos we arrived to Auschwitz. Three days after Shavuos.

We came to Auschwitz, me and my mother and five sister. Out of the five, one was single, 17 years old, the younger one.

Q How old were you?

A I was 29. When we got out from the train -- the train was a cattle train. When we got out from the train they told us to leave all the packages -- we didn't have too many packages, but whatever we had they told us to leave in the train.

We left and we got off the train, and we started to walk, and we came to a ramp and SS people probably were there, and they told us for everybody -- they shout, "Go rechts, links" -- left right, you know what I mean. We didn't know the difference from left to right.

Anyway, to make a long story short, my mother -- my father died a year before we went to Auschwitz. He was lucky. My mother was 64, and four sisters were married with children, so they went in the chimney right away.

Q Were the children with them?

A With the children, yes. My mother went because of her old age, and the sisters, they were young, but they had small children. So with the children, of course, they went -- I don't remember if it was links -- left where I went and they went right, or I went right and they went left. This, I don't remember.

In fact, I visited Auschwitz six months ago, me and my wife and my older son. We visited Auschwitz, all the camps where I was. I'll tell you this story later.

So I was told that those people, when they went

the other way, they got burned up right away. Right away.

Q Did you know that at the time?

A Well, this was -- I don't remember the date, but I know it was three days after Shavuos, because --

Q No, I meant did you know --

A At the time, no. No. I just find out later, because I was in Auschwitz for four weeks before they moved me further.

So in a few days later we smelled that smoke, you know, and we didn't know what it is. We thought it was -- it was big chimney like in a factory, you know, like where they make bread and stuff like that. We didn't know what it is. We didn't have an idea.

So, but there was people that were there from Slovakia and from Poland from before. We were the last transport what they brought out in 1944. There was people who came there in 1940 and '41, maybe. They said, "Oh, all those people, what they went the other way, they all burned up already. They went in the chimney right away."

Anyway, me and my sister, which she was 17 years old at the time, we went the other way, but I never saw my sister after that. And four weeks later they loaded us in a cattle train, a hundred people, 50 people on one side and 50 people on the other side, and in the middle had to

be open for two SS people with the rifle, you know. We didn't know where we going. Sorry.

Q That's all right.

A They loaded us on train, on the train, and they gave us one bread for five people for the row, one bread.

Q How long did that have to last?

A I'm not sure how long it took us, a day or a day and a half it took us to get -- we came to Mathausen (phonetic). To Mathausen we came. But I can't remember how long it took us, because this is in Poland and Mathausen is in Austria. You know. Because I visited now Mathausen, so I know exactly, you know. At that time I didn't know if it's Austria or it's Poland. I didn't know from nothing that time.

We came to Mathausen, they unloaded us from the train, and we walked a little while, and we came to Mathausen in a camp, in Mathausen camp. There they took us then in a washroom to give us a -- a washroom to take a shower. They took us in and we took a shower there.

We came out, and when we came out they lined us up five people in a line to work. Where, we didn't know at the time. While we were staying there they used to call it appell, you know, the five people in a line in German, appell, you know, they used to call it. So I fainted there. I was strong, but I was hungry and, you know.

So I fainted there. So the next boy, the next man who stand near me was a neighbor of me from home. His name was Schloima. You know, it's a Jewish name, Murrelstein (phonetic). So he got down there -- I still don't know where he got a little water, you know, and he brought me water. And I drank water, and I got up, you know, and we started to walk/work. [Sounds like vauk] We were walking/working(??) for about two hours -- pardon me?

Q What were you doing, what work?

A What work. So let me get there. We were walking for about two hours, and we came to a camp what is called Gooden (phonetic). Gooden.

We came there. There it was 20 barracks. New barracks. They were crematoria. In each barrack was a thousand people. They were brand new that time. They put in thousand people in each barrack. The next morning we got up and they took us to work by train. We had to walk to the train, and on the train we had to jump -- again a cattle train, you know. We had to jump. They didn't gave us a step ladder, you know, to step up. We had to jump from the ground in the train. And the German SS people, they had dogs with them, and we had to push one the other one, because they were hollering, "Clo, clo, clo (phonetic) schnell," hurry up, hurry up. And when it was already only one or two left and they couldn't jump up, so they let the dogs

on those people, and that was the end of those two or three people, you know, right there. Right there. They didn't come up any more on the train.

So they took us by train deep in the woods, and there they was building a factory for munition. So my job was -- seven people of us, to carry beams. Not steel beams, wooden beams; seven people, one beam, 12, 13 meter. That would be about how many feet? Probably approximately about 30 feet long, seven people of us.

I was there working for about four weeks. The next morning -- we worked at day, at that time. One week day shift and one week the night shift. Twelve hours work. But with the traveling it was about 14 hours. Without food. No food at all.

The next morning they took me out from that work and they put me down to a wheelbarrow to push cement on top on a line what it take on a conveyor. Cement. For the builder in the factory. We had to push the wheelbarrow. It was a conveyor, you know, what we could turn over the cement and it wouldn't fall out.

So I still had a pair of shoes from home. That's all I had, a pair of shoes from home, because the other clothes, in Auschwitz we had to undress and they gave us striped clothes, and we had to leave everything our clothes. But the shoes and the socks they allowed us to wear. So,

I still came with good shoes, high heel shoes, you know, from Europe, from Czechoslovakia, and the Kapo who was over me -- not only me, a few people what were pushing those wheelbarrows, you know. It was pretty hard, you know. It wasn't easy. He stole my shoes. He was another German. He was a Greyener (phonetic). He wasn't a German, he wasn't a Nazi -- I mean he was a Nazi, but I mean he was a Greyener. The Greyenen were even worse than the German. Greyenen, they joined the Nazi. These were a different nationality. Like the Poland were worse than the -- the Polish people, when they joined Hitler, you know, on their own they went to fight, they were also worse.

So he told me I should give him my shoes and he's going to give me a pair of shoes with wooden, wooden sole, you know, a pair of bad shoes. And I said, "No, I'm not going to give you the shoes." So what he had, he had a stick in the hand like a policeman, and how many times I went up and down with the wheelbarrow, he was hitting me over my back, over my head, over my feet, hitting, you know. This started around 12 o'clock at night. I was working at night shift that time already. It was the second week I was in because I was working night shift. Around 3 o'clock I gave in. I told him, "I'll give you my shoes."

And I gave him my shoes and he gave me his shoes. One was torn, and one was a little better. He



gave me those shoes. Now, I couldn't walk in those shoes, so when we came home in the barracks we went in the wash-room to get washed. The washroom is a bath -- it's a bath-room, you know, but it was fixed to go in maybe a couple hundred people, you know, a hundred on one side, and hundred on the other side to wash, you know.

And then we went for coffee, you know. They gave us black coffee, without sugar, without bread, nothing. This was our breakfast. And then I went -- I couldn't wear those shoes. So, I still had a piece of bread left from the -- from a day before. So there was a bazaar, you know, a market outside. The people were trading. The trading was not for money. Nobody had a nickel in the pocket. Nobody had money. The trading was either for cigarettes or for a piece of bread or for a piece of margerine or somebody got a piece of -- sometimes we used to get a piece of margerine, you know. So this was the women.

So what I did, I took that shoes and I was going to sell that shoes and buy for myself another shoe, one. Not two, only one, because one was fairly good, you know. But nobody wanted to buy my shoe because it was torn, so I was forced to go give away my piece of bread for one shoe to buy, I should have something to wear, because I had to go to work.

So now I still didn't want to threw away that

shoe, so I took my shoes in my hand and I was walking in my barrack. I still remember the number of the barrack was 18. It was 20 or one was 21, but my barrack was 18. And while I was coming in in the barrack a little kapo came and saw -- he came against me, you know. He saw the shoes in my hand. He didn't ask me any questions from where I have the shoes or something. He just said, "Du fafluchta Jude," (phonetic) -- you don't know German. You G-d damn Jew, where did you stole that shoes? So, but he didn't gave me a chance to tell him that, what happened or something.

So he took me in, in -- next to the kitchen was a little room, and he gave me a chair, and I had to bend over the chair and he took a handle from an ax, you know, a wooden handle from an ax, and he told me I should count how many times he's going to hit me. I should count. He didn't tell me how many times he will give me, but I should count. So I count 50. 50. And when I had 50, so he asked me how many I got. I said 50. "Ach, you G-d damn Jew. You can take more. You a strong guy." But he couldn't give me more, because he was tired already, so he got a buddy of his to give me more. But when the other buddy got on with me, he asked me how many I got, I didn't know already, because I was unconscious, you know. I didn't know already. So this what happened there.

So we went to sleep. That was daytime. And at

nighttime we went back to work, you know. And I went back on my job to carry those beams, you know. Not in the cement job, not with the wheelbarrow, but to carry the beams. I was carrying those beams then for about four weeks. After four weeks we stay lined up to go to work -- that was in the morning, for daytime, and the head of that block, the head of that barrack -- I mix in sometimes German name, block, you know -- the head of that barrack came to the kapo, who was watching out when we walked to work. In fact, there was a few of them, one on one side and one on the other side. And with dogs, you know.

So he said to one kapo he should pick him out ten strong people. Nobody knew for what, you know. So here they hollered out in German, somebody strong should step out. Everybody was afraid that they going to take them right away in the gas chimney, so they started to bend down, they shouldn't look strong, you know. So I bend down, too. So this kapo came with a stick, and gave me one over my head, and he said again, "You G-d damn Jew." In German it comes out different, "Fafluchta Jude," you know. But is the same thing.

So they picked out ten people.

Q You were one of them?

A I was one of them, yes, and they took -- they gave us a job. Out of the ten was one, a real strong guy.

He was from Romania. Also Jewish. We were all Jewish, of course. And they gave us a job to carry the shit, excuse me. There it was 20 barracks. And it was only one toilet where the water was washing down, you know. The toilet had 150 on one side and 50 the other side. The other 19, they only have out-houses, you know.

So, the out-houses, they were fixed -- I don't know if you ever saw a barrel what they got from herring. You know what -- from fish, herring, you know. So they had like 10, 12 barrels in each out-house, and those barrels, they had to be carried down in that toilet, you know, where the water, you know, was washing it down. So he took us down and we were supposed to take care five of them, five of those out-toilets. So we didn't know how to handle it, because we didn't have any hoops, you know, we didn't have any sticks to carry it. So we started to carry it just by hand, and it ran all over us, all over. But we have to do it.

We came down with those barrels there, and in the side, in one of the -- in one end from the bathroom was for those people who they were taking care the barracks. The Germans took out the prisoners from jail and put them over the Jews, the head over the Jews. So those what they were head of us, they used to go in that toilet there. They didn't go where we went, you know. They had a little

separate door there, and they went there. And one kapo comes to me and asks me for a piece of paper, you know. Somehow it happened I had a piece of paper, you know, and I gave him this piece of paper, and he left.

Then he came back, and he said to me again, "You G-d damn Jew, come to me in block -- in barrack 15 and I'll give you soup. I'll give you soup to eat," you know. But he didn't say to eat like we say to eat. To fretl (phonetic). It means like -- how would you say "eat," tofall (phonetic). You know -- anyway, anyway, "I'll give you to eat."

So here we didn't have a bucket what to go with, you know, but we did have a bucket -- but we were getting out the stuff from the barrel, you know, when it was only a little bit. So we turned over in the bucket and we filled it in, and we carried by bucket. So we washed that bucket with water and we went for soup to this guy. So he gave us soup. And no matter it was from, you know, from what it was, from the shit, excuse me, but we ate it, because we were hungry and we ate it.

Since that minute we had plenty what to eat, because we used to give paper for every one of them who came in, you know, and every one of them invited us to come, and they gave us soup and they gave us bread. They gave us salami, you know, and we had what to eat.

Q Where did you get the paper?

A Well, we went to clean for SS people, the toilets, on the outside of the wire. And almost every day. They had toilet what -- it was a bucket. We could pull out the bucket, you know. And they had in the toilet newspaper, those people, and we were stealing that. Maybe they would catch us and we would get hurt, you know. But we managed to steal a piece of paper from the newspaper. It was cut in pieces, you know. And that's how we got the paper. From that minute we have plenty what to eat.

But we didn't change clothes for 13 months. So we had lice. We had lice. The lice was eating us up. We had lice you wouldn't believe, like big flies, you know. And this wasn't enough, they still was making lice control. They came in in the barracks and they were making lice control. If they find -- and they find lice on everybody, because everybody had big lice, you know. And they were hitting us like dogs because we have lice.

Anyway, I was there for 13 months and I had what to eat. I had lice and I didn't have clothes, and after 13 months they find out that the Russian are coming close. So they grabbed us, they took us back to Mathausen. In Mathausen we stayed a few days -- I don't remember how many days -- outside.

And then from there they lined us up and we were walking to Lintz. Lintz is Austria. This was Pole --

this was deep Germany, Pruden (phonetic), you know, in Mathausen. No, Mathausen is in Austria, and this was in Austria, and we were walking, I believe, eight or nine days. Day and night we were walking. Most of the people died on the road, you know. And we stopped for about one hour in the middle of the night on a field. And they gave us five people, one bread for five people. And they gave for everybody a little bit beet soup. But the beet was from the field, not clean, which it was full of stone and full of gravel. But we ate it anyway. So most of them died and some of them survived. I survived.

So we came near Lintz. We passed Lintz. We walked through Lintz to the city, and from there we walked about another day and we came in the Gund (phonetic) which is called Wunskirchen (phonetic). Wunskirchen is a little village. So they took us in, in the woods, that particular place called Gundkirchel (phonetic). We came there one Friday afternoon, and the other Friday, which it was May the 8th in 1945, 3 o'clock in the afternoon we got free. I got -- me and three others, we were carrying a dead man, because those what they were alive -- they didn't gave us nothing to eat in Gundkirchel. But nothing at all. We ate -- we went in the field and we grabbed out something like a potato. But if they saw us doing that, the SS people, they shot us right there. Right there. If they saw us take

out a potato or a beet from the ground, they shot us right there.

So May the 8th, 3 o'clock in the afternoon those people what they were still alive, they had to carry the people what they died in the barracks. They pushed us in barracks, which it wasn't finished yet. When we came there Friday afternoon, it was a water and more up till the knees there. And there people were dying like flies. And we had to dig graves a little further up in the woods. And after we got done with the graves, we had to bury the dead people in those graves.

So four of us were carrying a person, and we saw that people are running. There they running. We didn't know where. So we threw down the dead man and we run also. So we come to the kitchen. That's when we find out that the German left and American came in, and they liberate, and this was the end. Then that was Friday. The next morning we started to walk, five of us. We tried to get -- we didn't even know where we are. Nothing, you know. But we tried to walk. So we came out on the road, on the highway, and we find out that the next town what we came a week ago through is Lintz. Lintz is in Austria. So we walked. I don't know how many days, about three or four days, and we came to Lintz. And Lintz, when we walked in on Lintz, we crossed a bridge.



The American soldiers took us over, and they took us in in barracks, and they gave us -- first of all, we went and we took showers. They gave us clean clothes, everything. They shaved us and they gave us to eat. So they gave us potatoes and pork meat. Potatoes and pork. And I ate, and after I got finished with that I got sick and tittle (phonetic), and I was laying there on the ground for four weeks. I didn't hear, I couldn't walk. For four weeks I was laying like a dead man on the grass in Lintz, because the hospital were all filled up. It was impossible to get in, in a hospital. And the other friend, with who I was walking, they didn't got sick because they were smarter. They didn't eat the pork meat, and I did. So I got sick and they were taking care of me for four weeks. After four weeks when I got a little bit better, the trains were running already a little bit, because the tracks was broken up, and we had to go from Austria to Czechoslovakia, you know, which is a long ride. Anyway, we left Lintz, and I came back to Munchach (phonetic) where I was born and raised, in July. This must have been -- we got free May the 8th, and I was sick for about four weeks. It was June. About six, seven weeks after we got free, I got in my home town.

My home town we came. I had my younger brother, what I didn't see him for about seven, eight years. He was home already. So we tried to make our old home for a home,

you know, again. We started to do business. But when we came home --

Q (Inaudible)

A We had a settlement home, and we had a big farm, and we had transportation, but with horses and wagon. Not with straw, you know. Old fashioned, those years, you know. But when we came back home it wasn't Czechoslovakia, it was the Russian was there. And we were there till October. And we saw that it's no way to live there with the Russian, you know. We cannot have freedom. We cannot own nothing. So what we did, we left everything what we had, and we -- at nighttime we went back to --

(END TAPE)